DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 478 752 SO 035 072

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TITLE Mobilization among Women Academics: The Interplay between Feminism and the Profession.

PUB DATE 2003-04-24

NOTE 39p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (84th, Chicago, IL, April 21-25, 2003).

PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS *Activism; Case Studies; *Faculty Organizations; *Feminism; Feminist Criticism; Higher Education; Qualitative Research; *Women Faculty

IDENTIFIERS Networking; University of Arizona; University of Nebraska Lincoln

ABSTRACT

Little of the scholarship that focuses on the professional lives of women faculty addresses how faculty women mobilize or how and with whom they create networks to work in academe. Women now make up more than 50% of the undergraduate student population, and just over 40% of Ph.D. recipients are women. Many campuses house women's centers and other resources for women. There has also been an increase in the numbers of feminist organizations throughout the academy. A study examined organizations that are feminist and activist primarily from a feminist perspective, since power within the academy is primarily patriarchal. The literature review focused on the mechanisms women faculty have pursued to transform higher education. Specifically, the study explored the scholarship on the networks women faculty create and on the activist strategies in which they engage. It used a comparative case study design to intensively investigate, over the course of a semester, two feminist faculty organizations at two public research universities: the Association for Women Faculty (AWF) at the University of Arizona and the Faculty Women's Caucus (FWC) at the University of Nebraska (Lincoln). Findings suggest there is no one model to describe academic feminism and that activist women faculty in campus-based grassroots feminist organizations construct their lives in multiple ways. Based upon the data, the AWF has been labeled a professional organization of feminists, while the FWC is labeled a feminist organization of professionals. (Contains 34 references.) (BT)

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ED 478 752

Mobilization among Women Academics:

The Interplay between Feminism and the Profession

Paper Presented at the 2003 AERA National Conference, Chicago, IL

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Much of the research about women faculty has centered around issues of equity, particularly in salary and promotion, and discrimination (Astin & Cress, 1999; Barbezat, 1988; Bellas, 1993, 1994, 1997; Benjamin, 1999; Park, 1994, 1996; Sandler, 1991; Toutkoushian, 1998). While focusing on the professional lives of women faculty, little of the scholarship addresses how faculty women mobilize or how and with whom they create networks in order to work in academe. It is the extraordinary dimension of women collectively acting on and in academe and society in which I am interested. I want to focus on women who are not just adapters and survivors, but are change agents. I seek to understand the relationships and activism of faculty women in order to shed light on how activist academic women define women's issues and what strategies they pursue in promoting social change.

Over the last three decades, the landscape of higher education has changed dramatically. Among these changes, women now make up more than 50 percent of the undergraduate student population. Just over 40 percent of all Ph.D. recipients are women, and the numbers of women faculty are increasing (Chronicle, 2002). Women's Studies programs and departments are now included among the academic programs at more than 700 colleges and universities (Thorne, 2000). Many campuses house women's centers and other resources for women. There has also been an increase in the numbers of feminist organizations throughout the academy. These are all positive indications that the climate has changed, and in many cases, has improved for women in higher education.

For this study, I am interested in the organizations that are both feminist and activist. In part, I am interested in them because they helped bring about the changes described above. Moreover, the continued existence of these organizations suggests that while the climate may

have improved for women in recent years, there are still concerns that need to be addressed and there are women who want to mobilize as a result.

Theoretical Framework

A diverse conceptual frame supports my research question and inquiry. Three theoretical perspectives interweave to form the fabric of my literature review, design, and analysis. Because I am interested in women as subjects and believe that power within the academy is primarily patriarchal, I will explore this study from a feminist perspective. Moreover, for this study, faculty and faculty work are central; therefore, professionalization theory will also inform my research. Finally, the connection of activist faculty women to the Women's Movement, and the potential for organizational change, influenced by activism, calls for inclusion of the social movement literature.

My review of the literature is embedded in the theoretical frameworks described above and focuses on the mechanisms women faculty have pursued to transform higher education. Specifically, I explore the scholarship on the networks women faculty create and on the activist strategies in which they engage.

Review of the Literature

Academic Women's Networks

Creating powerful networks can be a significant tool to provide support and improve the climate within academe, which is a driving focus of this study. In fact, Carlson (1994), Dickens and Sagaria (1997), Hensel (1991), Simeone (1987), and Twale and Shannon (1996) emphasize the value of networks among women, particularly feminist women, in academe. Thus, given the potential value of networks, women who have managed to access powerful and supportive ties

may be able to better navigate or change the system, which, in turn, may lead to personal and professional rewards.

Simeone (1987) argues that women academics need networks in order to decrease a sense of isolation and to build a power base within an institution. These networks can be important mechanisms to help overcome isolated incidents of and systemic gender discrimination (Carli, 1992). As the literature about the academic climate suggests, advancement depends not only on hard work and achievement, but on having advocates, direction, and encouragement—all potential benefits of network ties (Carli, 1992). These benefits may also result from activism, sometimes, but not always, emerging from network relationships.

Although not all women's academic networks are feminist in nature, many are. Ferree and Martin (1995) state that efforts of grassroots feminists are often unacknowledged and unrecognized. In fact, they claim that the numbers of women who participate in feminist organizations is higher today than in the height of consciousness raising groups (Ferree & Martin, 1995). Astin and Leland (1991), Caplan (1994), Childers, Rackin, Secor, & Tracy (1981), Garner (1996), Simeone (1987), and Theodore (1986) all discuss the creation of and benefits from academic feminist networks that are designed to facilitate collective action.

Activist Strategies

Although scholars often describe strategies to foster institutional change that center on the efforts of an individual academic woman rather than on collective action (Astin & Leland, 1991; Caplan, 1994; Garner, 1996; Glazer-Raymo, 1999, 2000; Theodore, 1986), many of the tactics described or suggested can be pursued either by an individual, by an individual who is a member of a network, or collectively. Ultimately, to improve the institutional climate for the next generation of women, academic women must anticipate, confront, and address expectations

that limit the advancement of women (Glazer-Raymo, 2000). To do so, activists should prod search committees to increase the diversity of the applicant pool, work with women outside the institution who can put pressure on the university or college, host and publicize events like speakers and conferences, request that the President make a public statement that gender discrimination will not be tolerated, and support administrators who are sympathetic to feminist scholarship and inquiry (Astin & Leland, 1991; Caplan, 1994; Garner, 1996; Glazer-Raymo, 1999, 2000).

However, existing research is not limited to individually-focused activist strategies. Other scholars whose work reflects the experiences of faculty activists focus on the power of the collective to transform the academic climate (Baldwin, Blattner, Johnson, Peder, & Shepard, 2000; Childers, et al., 1981; DeSole & Butler, 1994; Glazer-Raymo, 1999; Hyer, 1983; O'Leary & Lie, 1990; Smallwood, 2001; Swogger, 2000; Taylor, 1998; Theodore, 1986). Theodore (1986) learned from the stories of protestors, most of whom characterized their individualized activism as a negative experience, that it is only through collective strength can any movement achieve its goals and can the activist experience be positive. Based upon her data, she believes that collective action among faculty women can be effective. She also identifies strategies that activists can use, including arranging meetings with administrators, writing letters, collecting funds for defense purposes, sponsoring rallies and lectures, and creating petitions and demonstrations (Theodore, 1986).

O'Leary and Lie (1990) reference Theodore's (1986) study as they categorize the activist strategies of academic women. They indicate that evidence from Theodore's (1986) work helps to shape personal strategies. Further, recommendations from Theodore's (1986) findings characterize institutional strategies (O'Leary & Lie, 1990). Institutional strategies are considered

the most effective to bring about policy change that benefits large groups of individuals, accomplished through well-presented, data-driven arguments, and are often collective in nature. Collective action, particularly within Women's Studies programs, has shown to be successful at using data to initiate institutional change (O'Leary & Lie, 1990). The third strategy, political or governmental, is seen less often than personal or institutional strategies, especially among academics in the United States. However, this strategy has been successful in other countries, most notably Norway. Pressure on the government from feminist academics in Norway has led to the creation of the Secretariat for Women and Research (O'Leary & Lie, 1990), an example that could be pursued in other countries.

While existing research demonstrates that personal, collective, institutional, and governmental strategies exist and that academic women's networks can be instrumental in improving the campus climate, overall, the scholarship is somewhat limited. The complex essence of campus-based grassroots feminist organizations is not fully explored. Thus, it is the intent of the remainder of this study to complement the scholarship introduced with rich examples and analyses of how women faculty involved in collective action construct their lives and their activist strategies.

Research Question

Through this qualitative study, I want to explore the experiences of feminist activist academic women, self-identified by their involvement in campus grassroots organizations for women faculty, to gain a deeper understanding of how these women succeed in an academy often considered hostile to women. Specifically, the research question I seek to answer is: *How do women faculty in campus-based grassroots feminist organizations construct their lives and their activist strategies?*

To clarify, a grassroots activist organization is one that, for the design of this study, is formed and maintained by women faculty to address concerns of and improve the climate for women faculty. Such organizations are not created by Boards of Trustees or Regents, university administrators, or parties outside the institution—they are constructed and led by women faculty. I define activist strategies as the purposeful methods in which members of an organization engage in order to raise consciousness and foster change.

Design

In order to address my research question, I conducted an exploratory qualitative study. I used a comparative case study design to intensively investigate two feminist faculty organizations at two public Research I universities over the course of an academic semester.

I selected two feminist faculty organizations that serve as the foundation of my study. The first organization was the Association for Women Faculty (AWF) at the University of Arizona (UA). I chose this organization, in part because I was a board member of the AWF at the time of investigation, and therefore, had easy access to all aspects of the organization. Because of my involvement in this organization, I was a participant observer throughout the collection and analysis of the data. For the second case, I selected the Faculty Women's Caucus (FWC) at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln (UNL). For comparative purposes, I selected another women's faculty organization at a flagship public Research I institution.

The two settings, the University of Arizona and the University of Nebraska, had several similarities that make them ideal for comparative analysis. They were both public Research I, land grant, flagship universities. In addition, both institutions had a Women's Studies Department or Program and an active Commission on the Status of Women. Lastly, the numbers of instructional faculty at the two institutions were nearly identical. In 1999, there were 1485

faculty at the University of Arizona, of which 412 were women. For that same time period, the University of Nebraska had 1487 instructional faculty members, among which 453 were women.[1]

For each case study, I conducted a cross-case analysis. This sort of analysis allowed me to group together perspectives from different data sources to shape the themes that guided my research (Patton, 1990). By using a variety of field methods (document analysis, semi-structured interviews, and observations), I gathered comprehensive, in-depth information about each case.

In total, I analyzed 23 newsletters from the AWF (a temporally representative sample from 1983-2000) and the organization's constitution and by-laws. I analyzed 18 documents from the FWC that included electronic mail messages, meeting agendas, petitions, and letters. I observed six board meetings, a luncheon with the organization and the Board of Trustees, and two meetings with the AWF board and university leadership. Due to the FWC's organizational structure and time constraints, I was able to observe only one meeting related to the work of that organization. Finally, using purposive and snowball sampling techniques, I conducted 27 semi-structured interviews that were audio taped and transcribed, verbatim, with 11 active AWF board members, six former AWF board members, the director of Women's Studies at the University of Arizona, eight active FWC members (including the director of Women's Studies at UNL), and one former FWC member.

In order to address my research question, I focused on words and phrases that identified individuals, institutions, and other organizations within each university and external to each university that were highlighted in all of the data. With whom relationships were sought and forged is important in understanding how the organization tries to place itself within a larger context, and ultimately, how the organization tries to initiate change. I also paid attention to the

[1] At the time of the study, this was the most recent comparable data available.

kinds of issues the organization considers salient. The themes that emerged, the language that surrounded an issue (e.g., "this is an important issue"), the tone of the language (e.g., Is it rhetorical? Professional?), and the frequency it was mentioned shed light on the significance of one issue over another. In addition, I was aware of my personal bias as an active member of the AWF while coding, so I carefully examined the transcripts to uncover what was not being said and why.

Moreover, for each meeting I observed, I coded all agenda items (both formal and informal), how much time was spent on each topic, who spoke and for how long. I also coded the individual participant based upon her of his position within the organization or institution of which she or he was a part. The positional power of those with whom a relationship is forged shed light on the purpose of a particular network. To further guide my analysis of all data sources, I used protocols with prompts that were based upon the review of the literature and my research question. However, it is important to note that the protocol for the interviews in particular only served as a loose structure; for my approach to collecting these data was to conduct an informal conversational interview (Patton, 1990).

In the end, the most powerful patterns and themes that emerged from the data served as the framework for my findings that follow. In addition, I worked closely with a peer research group throughout the process to help me refine my protocols, address issues of bias, and reinforce the salient findings from this study.

Findings

Just as feminism is complex, the activism that emerges from feminist faculty organizations is complex as well. There appears to be no one mold to describe academic feminism and activism. Strategies range from collegial to confrontational, from leveraging the

university administration to leveraging a wider public. The Association for Women Faculty at the University of Arizona and the Faculty Women's Caucus at the University of Nebraska provide examples of the nature of activism among feminist women faculty. The voices of women involved in these organizations, as evidenced in interviews and organizational documents, convey the essence of these organizations. Observations of some of the activities of the AWF and FWC shed further light on how academic feminism and activism are operationalized.

By triangulating the findings from the analysis of organizational documents, observations of meetings, and in-depth interviews with women involved in the AWF and the FWC the structure and purpose, or organization, of the AWF and the FWC are explored. Based upon the data, the AWF has been labeled a professional organization of feminists, while the FWC is labeled a feminist organization of professionals.

Professional Organization of Feminists

Purpose. When I spoke to the women involved with the AWF about the purpose and description of the organization, their responses expressed a wide array of perspectives about the organization. Among the breadth of responses, seven women indicated that advocacy for women faculty to the administration was the purpose of the AWF and three shared that the organization was also there to support women faculty. With regard to the administration, members of the AWF felt that their work was not only to be a spokesperson for women faculty to the administration, but to work in concert with the administration to resolve concerns. The idea of working with the administration places the AWF is a position to influence institutional decision-making beyond the conservative ideals of some scholarly perspectives of shared governance that allows for faculty to advise only in curricular and other "academic" matters. In fact, the joint

participation in decision-making toward which members of the AWF strive is the kind of shared, rather than segmented, authority that McConnell and Mortimer (1971) prefer. Further, this type of governance assumes mutual trust, cooperation, and negotiation that is also often linked to organizations of feminists, so it is not surprising that the AWF sought this type of relationship with the administration.

> "Our activities are much more formal and they have changed in that they are now in partnership with the administration. Whereas before, we were this independent group of volunteering that operated in our own sphere, which is a worthy sphere." (Wanda Solidad, AWF)
>
> "I think the purpose of the AWF is to advance women's issues on campus, to make them more visible, to get them heard, to identify what are the most important and pressing issues facing women on campus, and to try to carry those issues forward to the administration and to get them acted on." (Olivia Nelson, AWF)
>
> "I wouldn't call it a militant, I wouldn't even call it a strongly activist group. It is an activist group who has strong feelings who want to approach and deal with problems in a professional way. It is a group that is trying to bring some of those issues to light and to have a forum and a platform for presenting it to the administration to see if some of the problems can be solved and if the environment on this campus for women can be improved." (Deborah Young, AWF)

Dealing with problems in a professional way and working with the administration to advance the issues of women faculty are the foci of the AWF. Assuming the responsibility of shared governance, either narrowly in academic matters, or more broadly, reinforces the professionalized expectation that faculty will have a voice in institutional decisions, but by way of providing advice through established mechanisms of consultation. Confrontation and protest that are often evident in social movements, including the Women's Movement, are gentler or non-existent strategies for this organization. To be seen as professionals first, and feminist activists second, is critical. In fact, the bylaws of the organization, which were written in the early 1980s state that the purpose of the AWF is to "address itself to the interests and concerns of professional faculty women at the UA." Never is it to get in the way of the administrative

workings at the UA; rather, it is the purpose of the AWF to help the administrators do their work with the goal of improving the climate for women faculty at the same time.

Membership. A review of the documents of the Commission on the Status of University Women (CSUW), the precursor to AWF that included faculty, staff, and students (not to be confused with the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), which was mandated by the Board of Trustees in the early 1980s), suggests that it was initially reluctant to buy into and accept the prevailing institutional culture. In the early years of the CSUW, the organization proposed the creation of a Women's Studies program, which developed into one of the first such programs in the country. The group participated in community women's marches, Equal Rights Amendment rallies, and encouraged membership in the National Organization of Women (NOW). These activities are not surprising, as it formed in 1972, simultaneously with the rise of Second Wave Feminism. The CSUW was first referred to as "the group" by its members. There was speculation, according to a recorded history created by a CSUW member and later AWF President, that the organization disbanded, in part, due to limited membership linked to the fear of junior women to belong to a "women's group." This is to say that the CSUW had a reputation, at least among its members and potential members, that it was a feminist organization and belonging to it could compromise one's reputation in the university, threatening tenure and promotion.

Some of the types of activities of the CSUW remained fairly similar to the activities of the AWF that followed. For example, the CSUW documents gathering information about numbers of women by department and rank and making gender-related policy recommendations—all efforts complementing the administrative workings of the UA. Further, while the organization was initially more clandestine, the CSUW indicated during a meeting, as

evidenced in minutes, that because some women were unwilling to join "women's groups," they needed to break down the organization's secretive and radical stereotypes to demonstrate that it was an "active and professional organization." These minutes are the first documented evidence that for the CSUW, it was more important to be considered professional than to be deemed feminist. Indeed, there was some sense that the two were mutually exclusive. The organization's vision shifted from more radical feminist activism to emphasizing professionalization and legitimacy, setting a precedent for much of the activism of the AWF that followed.

In 1979, the CSUW disbanded due to lack of membership and concerns that its focus was too broad. While a broad constituency should have led to a large membership, that did not happen. Some women were afraid, even after the CSUW professionalized, to be affiliated with a feminist group. Still others felt that their particular issues would not be adequately addressed because the CSUW agenda was too broad, trying to resolve issues for students, staff, and faculty. For example, if the organization was putting its efforts into affirmative action procedures for student admissions, that would detract from the potential work to diversify the faculty. Because of the vacancy created by the dissolution of the CSUW, a few years later, in 1981, a group of women faculty, led by Claudia MacIntosh, decided to form a new feminist organization.

> "People wanted to form a group that would be more of an activist group and could focus more on faculty issues, and also more of a mentoring and advocacy group for the members." (Robin Neigh, AWF)

> "[Women faculty] were upset about salaries [in the early 1980s]. I always wanted there to be a political organization [to address this and other issues] because [as head of Women's Studies], I didn't want to do explicit politics from Women's Studies. Finally, I got a group together and we went to the Union Club. We said we need to start an organization." (Claudia MacIntosh, AWF)

This marked the beginning of the AWF. While focusing specifically on faculty issues led to the creation of an organization with a clearer mission than its CSUW predecessor, it stressed the centrality of the faculty profession. The organization also sought to intentionally include feminists, and to provide a political outlet for those feminists in Women's Studies. The Director of Women's Studies at that time spearheaded the formation of the AWF, so that there could be a place for activism outside of the academic discipline of Women's Studies. By doing so, the academically marginalized discipline of Women's Studies could gain legitimacy by distancing itself from activism and focus on enhancing feminist scholarship, teaching, and grant writing.

The group that initiated the AWF wanted to form a feminist organization for faculty and purposely excluded most staff and students, other than academic professionals—particularly those professionals who engage in "faculty work" but do not have a faculty title, like researchers and librarians—and graduate students. Including academic professionals and graduate students in the work of the AWF was secondary, at best, to the role of faculty, as evidenced by the lack of data about these groups or their issues in interviews, observations, or newsletters. Both groups were invited to become members and some academic professionals served in leadership positions, but there was very little evidence to indicate that graduate students and academic professionals had anything but a marginal or supporting role in the AWF.

As mentioned, academic professionals, as a group, seemed like an afterthought in most of the newsletters, even though there were officers from the library throughout the early years of the organization. The fact that leadership of the organization included academic professionals, but that group was practically invisible due to the focus on tenure-track faculty, demonstrates just how the organization prioritized its constituents, and who ultimately had more professional power. There were rare exceptions in the data when academic professionals did have a presence,

specifically in the newsletters from 1988-89, 1993-94, and 1998-99. However, even in these newsletter issues, faculty issues remained the focal point.

Likewise, graduate students were relatively invisible in the organization. However in 1998, the AWF decided to reach out to graduate students by having a subcommittee for graduate students for the first time. The outreach to graduate students was due to a push by the AWF President that year who felt the organization needed to reach out to that population. Because the President and, subsequently, the board of the AWF, wanted to encourage the inclusion of graduate students, there was an AWF program focused on graduate student issues in 1998 and 1999. During those same years, two of the AWF subcommittees sought to include graduate student issues in their agendas. Specifically, as described in the newsletters from that time, one subcommittee met with the graduate college to recommend changes to a continued enrollment policy for graduate students and the other subcommittee recommended that Ph.D. students of color become a resource to help the university "grow its own" faculty. However, these were the only times these issues were mentioned in newsletters. Unlike on-going faculty concerns, like policies for sick children, the AWF did not continue to follow up on these graduate student concerns.

Leadership. In the early years of the AWF, Claudia MacIntosh's vision of a grassroots organization came to fruition. Although there was an executive board that met, the general membership participated in meetings for the organization. While the meetings may not have had the entire membership present, the entire membership was invited. If there were executive meetings, those appeared secondary, according to the emphasis in the newsletters on the larger, general membership meetings. The primary work of the organization centered around luncheons

where the entire membership was invited. That meant, for example, in 1986-87, 180 dues-paying members would be invited and often 60-100 women would attend.

The more inclusive pattern in the early years differs considerably from the more recent efforts of the organization. In recent years, the primary work has been done by the board, not by the general membership.

> "In a way, the AWF is the board. Mostly, the rest of the people who belong to AWF are the audience. The only people who are the activists are the board. I don't even think the membership knows what is going on." (Claudia MacIntosh, AWF)

While there now are events that include the membership, with the exception of the annual Board of Trustees luncheon, most events have about 30 participants. Although there are more women faculty, academic professionals, and graduate students now than in the 1980s, there are only about 100-120 dues paying members. The AWF has not changed its recruiting strategies, so the decline in participation may be due to many other factors. One possible reason for the decreased membership may be a decreasing interest or need among women to be involved in feminist activities, including a perception that the Women's Movement is over. Another reason may be an increasing work load among potential members that does not provide ample time to engage in volunteer work that is not rewarded in promotion and tenure processes. Still a third reason may be that the potential members have more loyalty to their professional identities and individual disciplines than to an identity of activism oriented toward changing the UA.

A current board member of the organization reflected that membership numbers were not necessarily critical.

> "I don't think [the administration] has a sense of who the membership is really, and in some ways, even though there is paid membership, in a lot of ways, it is all women faculty in whatever rank or position who are part of it. I think it is perceived that way by the central administration and by the university at large. So when they talk about the Association for Women Faculty, they talk about all those women. So in a sense, it is bigger than it really is, when you think of paid membership." (Uma Himinez, AWF)

In a number of ways, this statement captures the essence of the organization. First, it recognizes that perception, especially among the administration, is a very important strategy. Second, it reinforces that it is the board that is doing the activist work; no longer is the paid membership the heart of the organization.

The AWF has an executive board of leaders designated in traditional positions—president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer/membership. In addition, there is a larger board that includes the executive board, liaisons with other campus organizations, and chairs of the various subcommittees. Specifically, liaisons to the CSW, Women in Academic Medicine, and the American Association of University Women serve as AWF board members, as do the chairs of the minority women, action, graduate and professional student, and family care issues subcommittees. While there are general dues-paying members, as previously mentioned, it is this larger board that conducts the on-going business of the organization.

> "In some ways, it is the board, because the board kind of acts for the membership and identifies issues. Ideally the membership is involved in subcommittees. That happens more or less. The family care issues that happens more and some of the other issues, that happens historically less." (Olivia Nelson, AWF)

> "The link between the membership and the board isn't well defined. I think right now you have the 8 people making the decisions for the membership." (Kari Morgan, AWF)

> "It was always the executive board. There were attempts at committee structures and some committees were more successful than others, but it was definitely the executive board." (Sallie Edgar, AWF)

Although there are opportunities for the general membership to become involved in the organization, primarily through serving on subcommittees, it happens only sporadically. The board and the AWF President have positional power that could be used to reach out to other members, as it had in the early years of the organization. Such an effort would require a structural change in the modus operandi of the AWF. The time and energy involved could

reintroduce the organization to its grassroots beginnings. However, it would take an initial significant expenditure of time and energy among the volunteers on the board. Moreover, it would require a redistribution of power, which is often difficult to surrender. In addition, most of the board did not see the current leadership structure and power-base as problematic (or problematic enough about which to do anything), leaving little reason to pursue a change. The dues-paying members and the potential members have not raised any concern about the current structure and leadership of the AWF, implying that they are either happy with the status quo, complacent, or don't believe the AWF has any real power.

Because of the minimal role of the general membership, the AWF's agenda is shaped by the will of the board, not by the will of the membership. Certainly, board members may talk to general members about issues of concern and those issues may become a part of the agenda, but it is the board, and in many cases, the President of the board, who establishes the organization's agenda.

> "I think the chair has a lot of weight, but they listen to other input too. I think the agenda is determined this way." (Da-Ming Quo, AWF)

> "The President [of the board] would decide if there were bigger overarching issues that needed to be dealt with the [university] President and the Provost…I would say that is one way in which the agenda gets set. I would say another area is by members raising issues—like junior people needing information about how to get through the tenure process or whatever." (Robin Neigh, AWF)

> "The President [of the AWF] has a very strong role in [determining the agenda]." (Lisa Bartholomew, AWF)

This described method is top-down and hierarchical, resembling the professional institutional bureaucracy rather than a more feminist collegial structure.

However, three of the current board members with whom I spoke were unsure of how the agenda is determined and by whom. When asked how the agenda was determined, they responded:

> "You got me on that one." (Nora Islip, AWF)
>
> "I have no idea." (Margie Cather, AWF)
>
> "I don't know. I guess maybe we will find out." (Deborah Young, AWF)

Others expressed that they were uncomfortable with the way the agenda was established by indicating that they see an ideal way to set the agenda, but it is different than the how the AWF operationalizes it.

> "Theoretically, it is determined by the will of the membership. In actuality, it is in a core group of highly involved people who have stuck with the organization year in and year out and to some extent have taken a proprietary interest in it." (Wanda Solidad, AWF)
>
> "In the best of possible worlds, the agenda would be determined by the board. Bringing things together at meetings where we would have time to discuss them, which we haven't this year really. Bringing up issues and saying, 'what do you think about this?' Saying 'these are the issues we see.' Then having the board vote on basically what should be the agenda. If we have trouble with certain issues, or doubt about it, sending it to the larger membership saying, 'we've identified these as possible agenda issues for AWF to advocate or act on.'...Ideally, you would get the whole membership buying in." (Olivia Nelson, AWF)

The fact that some board members don't know how the agenda is determined and others are somewhat unhappy with the mechanism to set the agenda is important. The board has the power to change the situation, but is either unwilling or unable to do so, or perhaps, the members of the board do not recognize the power that they have. In the end, the agenda that the AWF board (or its President) creates is not inclusive, consensual, or grounded in grassroots activism. Instead, data show that for the AWF, power, legitimacy, and traditional patriarchal systems frame the agenda setting of the organization.

Feminism. Six of the women with whom I spoke at UA were former board members of the AWF, but were no longer actively involved with the organization. All of these women self-identified as feminists. Interestingly, it was among the current board membership where feminist self-identity was more vague. It should be noted that while someone may not identify with feminism, a bystander may evaluate that person's actions and motivations as feminist. However, it is not insignificant that some of the women in this study feel uncomfortable with or unclear about the label of feminism.

Among the women involved in AWF who discussed feminism (since the Director of Women's Studies is not formally involved in the organization, her discussion of feminism was not included in this part of the analysis), one woman stood out, stating that she did not consider herself to be a feminist.

> "I don't see myself as a feminist, where I think a lot of the other people there are, or they have really strong women's issues." (Kari Morgan, AWF)

However, as our conversation continued, she did reconsider her position about feminism.

> "I agree that there is a real problem in the way women are treated on this campus. I don't know, maybe I am [a feminist]." (Kari Morgan, AWF)

Another woman was clearly unsure of her relationship to feminism. When asked whether she considered herself a feminist, she responded: "If I could figure out a definition, maybe. I don't know, because I just don't know what that really means." (Uma Himinez, AWF) In addition, there was one woman who only felt comfortable using her own definition of feminism in order to identify herself as feminist. When asked whether she considered herself a feminist, she said: "Yes, with [my] definition." (Deborah Young, AWF) For an organization that once purposefully included and spoke as feminists, its identity and priorities have apparently shifted.

Further emphasizing the professional rather than the feminist, the first newsletter in 2000-2001introduced the 16 members of the AWF board. In the introductions of board members, connections to status and prestige dominate. Most read like an abbreviated curriculum vitae. The majority of references about the issues of women faculty that are to be the core of the association appear at the end of lengthy paragraph that lists professional credentials, back-grounding the work of the AWF, and fore-grounding the women's qualifications in traditional academic terms. The language of the academic profession resonates throughout each biography. Only three mentioned roles other than professional work (e.g., wife, parent, community volunteer). For feminists who believe the personal and professional are intrinsically linked, this was not emphasized in the introductions. Further, only one woman used the word *feminist* in her biography and this was used to describe her scholarly work.

The interviews tell only a slightly different story with regard to incorporating gender and feminism into their scholarship. While the six former and founding members with whom I spoke use a strong feminist frame in their scholarly work, only four of the 12 current members indicated that they purposefully incorporate feminism or gender in their scholarship. This diffusion of membership has opened the board to include a diversity of academic voices, but it has also created some challenges for the organization.

> "It used to be like that was where the AWF faculty came from Women's Studies. Now it's like they come from different places. But we find often we are talking different languages. Some of the people who didn't come from Women's Studies have different understandings, and are not in some ways as advanced in their perception of what feminist activism is. You are bringing along people who are less aware of the issues in that way and kind of have to learn how to speak about them." (Olivia Nelson, AWF)

This means that to maintain its feminist grounding, the current AWF has to do consciousness raising work for its members, including its board members, which may take time away from advancing other agenda items. Or, the organization may forgo this education, potentially shifting

the AWF further away from its feminist roots. Either way, growth and expansion for the AWF has been both a blessing and a curse, and has moved the organization to one that is professional, first, and feminist, second.

Feminist organization of Professionals

Purpose. In 1988, Beth Newman met a colleague for lunch. During that meeting, they decided that the women faculty at UNL needed a mechanism to get their voices heard on campus. While there was a Commission on the Status of Women, faculty were only a subset of the membership and vision of that organization. In addition, the CSW was a university committee. Beth and her colleague wanted a grassroots organization that had an independent voice and was not responsible to UNL administration. Like Claudia MacIntosh's meeting at the UA, Beth's meeting ignited a spark—a spark that became the Faculty Women's Caucus.

The FWC differs from the AWF in its organization. Rather than being a professional organization of feminists, it is more aptly described as a feminist organization of professionals. As with the AWF, feminism and academic work are both important parts of the organization. However, for the FWC, it is feminism that shapes the organization; it is not a professional organization run by feminists. Moreover, unlike the AWF, in which the members are more passive or cooperative vis à vis the administration, the members of the FWC see their roles as much more active and confrontational. The centrality of feminist activism is evidenced as the members of the FWC described the purpose of the organization. For example, some described the purpose of the FWC as a mechanism to keep the administration in check regarding women's issues on campus.

> "I would say [the purpose of the organization] is to keep an eye on the administration and try and prod them to making this a more female friendly, even minority friendly environment." (Natalie Ingram, FWC)

> "I really think that is the purpose, to be a watchdog on everything that has to do with women and be willing to take a stand." (Catherine Eller, FWC)

> "[We are a group of women who] don't let administrators get away with things. If we weren't there, I can't imagine what would happen." (Nancy Nichols, FWC)

"Keeping an eye on," "being a watchdog," and not letting the "administration get away with things" describe an organization that is much more confrontational than congenial. Others recognized the need to monitor the administration, but they also shared that the organization must remain distinct and separate from the administration in order to be effective.

> "[The purpose of the FWC] is to have another voice on campus for women faculty that is not beholden to any administrative unit. I think that is the political position of the Caucus." (Karen Smith, FWC)

> [The purpose is] to speak for women in ways that the Commission on the Status of Women can't, because it has to answer to the President. That is sort of the underlying premise." (Nicole Carsen, FWC)

Both the FWC and the AWF describe themselves in relation to their respective university administrations. However, complementing its more confrontational activism, the FWC has a more separatist stance within UNL, which is markedly different than the AWF, who sees itself in partnership with the administration. The FWC's separatism is reminiscent of radical feminism, while the AWF chooses to engage in a more liberal feminist tactic by believing, on some level, that the existing administrative structure can be trusted and can work.

Membership. In some ways, the FWC is more exclusive than the AWF. Only tenure-track and non-tenure-track faculty comprise the membership, while the AWF includes academic professionals and graduate students. At the same time, by only including faculty, the FWC does not struggle with competing issues and constituencies that the AWF must consider.

> "It is a loose coalition of women faculty who have specific agendas that address the general status of women on campus and that target women faculty in particular." (Irene North, FWC)

> "[T]he Caucus is good because there is no list of individual names. No one knows if you are there or not. There is never attendance. Sometimes we do take attendance just to gather e-mail addresses and stuff. But no one really knows if anyone was there." (Beth Newman, FWC)

> "We don't want too much formalization, as we might become an adoptee of the administration—I really like to think of us an orphan." (Natalie Ingram, FWC)

The Caucus does not have dues or even a formal list of members. Unless a member self-identifies as affiliated with the FWC, she is anonymous. This strategy is particularly important for untenured women who may face condemnation among colleagues for being connected to a feminist organization. Although it should be noted that during the course of this research, the members of both organizations encouraged me to use their given names, despite my methodological decision to change them.

The lack of structured membership is in stark contrast to the AWF. Remaining intentionally unstructured creates a distinction from, and competes with, the traditional, professionalized, university hierarchy. By contrast, in the case of the AWF, its structure replicates, and complements, the administrative structure.

A further difference between the professional AWF and the feminist FWC is the way in which the memberships are involved. For every meeting, the FWC sends out an electronic message to all women faculty at UNL, inviting them to attend the upcoming meeting and to get involved in the FWC. Over time, those that have responded to these invitations has expanded. However, there is a core group of individuals who have consistently participated in the FWC.

> [It is important to have] "a group of women who respond to immediate issues that no one else will respond to, that don't forget things that haven't been changed that people have brought up over the last many years, who have an institutional memory among all of us and don't let administrators get away with things." (Nancy Nichols, FWC)

> "[The FWC] is a loose coalition of women faculty who have specific agendas that address the general status of women on campus and that target women faculty in

> particular. [Over time], new people have come on, particularly around particular issues." (Irene North, FWC)

The core group is critical in sustaining the Caucus, but it relies on the additional support of more peripheral members to advance its agenda. Those members whose involvement tends to wax and wane tend to be issue-driven. They choose to become participate based upon individual passions for an agenda item, and they see their commitment as finite (i.e., until the issue is resolved). This differs from the membership role in the AWF. Although the intent of the subcommittee structure in the AWF is to engage the general membership in particular issues, the commitment to a subcommittee appears to be year-long, one which few general members agree to participate. Further, because of the dues-paying expectation of membership in the AWF, there is may be a sense among members that they are paying for the board to do the activist work for them. Such a sentiment does not exist in the FWC. While women faculty can choose to let the core group address issues for all women faculty, there is no mechanism, financial or otherwise, to support the FWC, other than by becoming involved.

Leadership. Identifying leaders in the FWC is a simple, straightforward process. Seven of the nine women interviewed at UNL discussed the leadership of the organization and indicated that it was not a matter of certain faculty trying to garner power by becoming a leader. Rather, someone had to emerge as a chair or co-chair and individuals who were willing found themselves in that role for one or two years.

> "Basically, anyone who is willing to do it can do it, as long as they are not trying to undermine [the organization]." (Beth Newman, FWC)

> "Just by being willing and say you will do it. I think some of us have a sense of obligation that it is my turn. Others have done their turn, so I will take a turn, and maybe I'll have to take another turn in the future." (Catherine Eller, FWC)

> "…it is mainly who is willing to do it." (Karen Smith, FWC)

Further, it is not just the chair or co-chairs who are considered leaders. Anyone involved in the organization who is interested in mobilizing around an issue can, and often does, become a leader. The diffusion of leadership is non-hierarchical and more feminist in nature. The following voices capture the open, participatory perspective on leadership within the FWC. When asked how someone becomes a leader in the group, women shared:

> "Just by default, by speaking up, by coming to meetings." (Nicole Carsen, FWC)
>
> "And also by active participation in the meetings, I think you naturally take an important role." (Margaret Green, FWC)
>
> "Show up to the meetings." (Natalie Ingram, FWC)

Although the core group of women (about eight to ten women faculty) provide leadership in terms of providing a historical perspective of the organization and by doggedly continuing to be involved in nearly every issue of the FWC, it is personal, not positional, power that places these women in leadership roles. It is because of the respect for personal power within the organization that others outside the core group can and often do assume leadership roles. Leadership is dynamic and open within the FWC, which affords anyone who wants to participate to present agenda items and to organize activist strategies.

The agenda for the FWC is established in a non-hierarchical fashion that complements its leadership structure. According to those currently involved in the group, women throughout campus bring issues to meetings, and those issues establish the content of the FWC's activist agenda.

> "Whoever wants to put work into it, that is what the agenda will become. If you are willing to pick up the ball and carry it, it will happen." (Irene North, FWC)
>
> "[The agenda is determined] either by someone raising an issue, or just by thinking about the issues that are out there and bringing it to the agenda." (Nicole Carsen, FWC)

> "[The agenda is determined] by whoever attends the meetings and by whoever raises an issue and follows through on it." (Beth Newman, FWC)

In true grassroots fashion, any woman faculty member at UNL can raise an issue that may become part of the FWC's agenda. Ultimately, if there is support for the issue, members of the Caucus will mobilize and act. For the AWF, it is up to the President and the board to create and carry out the agenda—a strategy that is much more top-down than the web-like tactics of the FWC.

The FWC tries to focus the agenda on issues that will improve the situation for a large number of women rather than to address the individual concerns of a woman. This strategy allows the organization to try to make broad, systemic changes instead of looking for a loophole or helping an individual negotiate and perpetuate the perceived patriarchy.

> "There have been people who have brought their very individualized agendas to the Faculty Women's Caucus. I think the Caucus has been very good at providing support and also leading those people back into other mechanisms for dealing with that and not getting sidetracked... It is not because we don't value, understand, and sympathize with those experiences...But it is the understanding that it is about the FWC moving forward everybody as best you can, trying to lift everybody." (Irene North, FWC)

This aspect of the organization is another that highlights its feminist priorities. Rather than fighting for the merits of an individual case, systemic change is what is sought. The FWC again places radical feminist principles over those of liberal feminism, which would seek to advance an individual cause within the existing administrative structure.[2]

Feminism. At the University of Nebraska, all of the faculty with whom I spoke considered their organization and themselves feminist. However, like more of the women involved in the AWF, two women were more hesitant embrace the label of feminism outright. They agreed that they were feminists, but only by their own definition of feminism.

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[2] It should be noted that there is no evidence in the data from the AWF that it focuses on the merits of individual cases. Like the FWC, it is interested in improving the climate of all women.

> "I'll say what feminism is to me. I know this doesn't coincide with the others." (Fran Cousins, FWC)

"Let me put it in how act within what I call my feminism." (Margaret Green, FWC)

Interestingly, neither of these women is among the core group involved in FWC. Fran left UNL in 1992 and was only involved in FWC peripherally. Margaret periodically participates when the organization is working on an issue that is salient to her. However, those in the core group considered themselves feminist without qualifying the word feminism.

At UNL, all of the women who were involved in the FWC are feminists, while at UA, the women who were initially involved identified as feminists, but at present, the most involved members (i.e., the board) do not necessarily identify with the feminist movement. Perhaps this is due to the fact that those first involved with the AWF in the early and mid-1980s were Second Wave feminists, and as time elapsed, the organization became more professionalized and younger faculty became involved, who did not identify with the Second Wave of feminism, while the core members and nature of the FWC have changed very little since 1988, maintaining a consistent feminist framework.

Given these findings, one may ask whether an organization is truly a feminist organization if its members are not all feminists. While the answer seems to beg a simple "yes" or "no," simplicity will not suffice. Feminism is a complex social theory, comprised of multiple strands, and it exists in a political, cultural, and social context. The voices of the women in this study and the descriptions of their organizations demonstrate the rich, complicated dimensions of feminism, for women, as well as for men and institutions.

Being a member of an organization dedicated to improving the climate for women on campus, like FWC and AWF, does not preclude membership of non-feminists or those unsure of their relationship to the feminist movement. Further, the political, cultural, and social climate vis

à vis feminism, specifically the conservative backlash of recent years, shapes a context where some activists are uncertain about embracing or unwilling to accept a feminist label. It is clear that this climate, and those women involved in FWC and AWF, mutually shape the strategies and agenda of grassroots activism in these cases.

Despite the complexity of feminism, it is the role of feminism for these organizations and their members that is significant. Feminism is the guiding force for the professionals within the FWC. For the AWF, being seen as professionals first is paramount; feminism has an important place, but it is historical and secondary (and for some, perhaps even tertiary). Moreover, it is the positioning of feminism that makes each organization, and the strategies that are used to advance its particular agenda, unique.

Discussion

Through exploring the collective action of women in two different grassroots feminist organizations, I have shared the experiences of successful academic women who want to make it easier for other academic women to succeed. The stories that emerge from organizational documents, activities, and most poignantly from their own voices define two different ways to organize for the purpose of facilitating institutional change. In order to find deeper meaning in this study's findings, it is important to return to the research question that guided this research. Before doing so, it is important to state that the findings within this study are limited only to the organizations and the women I interviewed in the Association for Women Faculty at the University of Arizona and the Faculty Women's Caucus at the University of Nebraska. However, the organization and strategies of these grassroots collectives can serve as mechanisms to better understand similar networks and to provide direction and inspiration for the creation of new networks on other campuses.

To most completely answer the question, "How do women faculty in campus-based grassroots feminist organization construct their lives and their activist strategies?," I have taken a feminist approach that merges the personal and professional, recognizing that these organizations (the AWF and the FWC) are part of the lives of the academic women who I studied. As such, the nature of the organizations is a fundamental part of the way in which their lives are constructed.

For the women at the University of Arizona, the organization of which they are a part is a professional organization of feminists. They see the AWF as a grassroots collective that, first and foremost, addresses issues central to faculty women in a professional way. These academic women seek to work with the administration to resolve problems. In fact, the AWF, and the women who are involved in it, act in many ways as an extension of the university administration. The leadership very much mirrors the hierarchy of the administration, with a President who constructs the agenda. Further, while there is a board and a general membership body, the membership has little involvement in the day-to-day work of the AWF.

The place of feminism in the organization has shifted over time. The foremothers of the AWF purposely selected organizational leaders who were feminist. Now, the place of feminism is secondary. Some women involved in the AWF do identify as feminist, but the organization has evolved to include women who are uncertain about labeling themselves feminist. Through the AWF, the academics involved appear to want to have their legacy be tied to professional efforts, not to feminism.

At the University of Nebraska, the women in the FWC have constructed an organization that places feminism first. The FWC is a feminist organization of professionals. By creating an organization distinct from UNL's Commission on the Status of Women, which is a part of the

administrative structure of the university, the women in the FWC purposely designed an organization that was separate from the administration. They see the FWC as a mechanism to keep the administration in check when it comes to addressing gender issues on campus. The organization is loosely structured, lacking a board, but does have co-chairs to call meetings. Every woman involved, either as a core member or more peripherally, feels she can contribute to the agenda and participates in activities to advance the FWC's agenda. Power is shared within the organization, complementing the feminist nature of the FWC. Further, individual members self-identify as feminist and see that theoretical relationship as important to the work of the FWC.

Thus, the evidence from this research shows that women faculty in campus-based grassroots feminist organizations construct their lives in multiple ways. Both organizations make meaning of the professional and feminist identity of academic women, but the degree to which one takes precedence over the other differs. Neither construction is better than the other. Rather, the research shows that the lives of academic women are complex and that there are multiple ways to make meaning of and to organize the personal and professional.

Implications

This research leads to several implications, not only for organizations like the AWF and the FWC, but for the institutions that have such organizations. First, campus-based grassroots feminist faculty organizations are faced with multiple influences that ultimately shape the way academic feminism is defined for these groups. The ways that women involved in such organizations define and embrace feminism, coupled with how they see themselves influenced by their profession, shape the sorts of strategies and agendas that they use.

Second, for activists like those in this study, access to administrative leadership can dictate the sorts of networks that the organization seeks. For an administration that is trusted and welcoming, creating close ties with the administration is crucial. However, for an administration that is adversarial, distancing the organization from the administration is a helpful tactic to advance its agenda.

Third, organizations like the AWF and the FWC include mostly tenure-track women. Those women who have tenure are more able to take risks and to "rock the institutional boat." They are in a much better position to address the issues of those who are students (particularly those aspiring to be faculty, so as not to dilute the faculty focus of the organization); faculty of color; faculty with disabilities; gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgendered faculty; and/or not on the tenure-track. Further, given the large numbers of women in these more marginal groups, campus-based grassroots feminist faculty organizations can exponentially increase their power base by welcoming these women and simultaneously create a critical mass and safe space for all women.

Fourth, institutions benefit from these sorts of organizations. This is not to suggest that administrative leaders should seek out members and establish an organization, for the grassroots nature would be eliminated. The effectiveness of such organizations would be undermined, as is often the case with campus commissions on the status of women. Upper-level administrators may view these organizations as annoyances or problems. However, the successful women in these organizations have institutional loyalty. They are committed to improving the climate on their own campus, not only for themselves but for the successful women who follow them. In a time when faculty have become increasingly more nationally and internationally focused, this is particularly meaningful.

Moreover, the changes which have occurred due to the activism from campus-based grassroots feminist faculty organizations, whether through a formal policy change or through an increased sense of support for one woman, are tremendous benefits for any institution. A change that leads to greater access and equity should be embraced by any institution, and that change is often sparked by the activist agenda and strategies of organizations like the AWF and the FWC.

The findings and contributions to the literature about feminist faculty that have emerged from my study are important, but not exhaustive. In fact, based upon my research, I hope additional studies will explore activism among feminist academics, including a mixed methods study that includes a quantitative network analysis of all of the networks (personal and informal) academic women create. Further research should be pursued to examine whether the issues and strategies differ for organizations in different types of institutions, including those that employ more women (e.g., community colleges, liberal arts colleges). In addition, studies should be undertaken that consider how organizational lifecycles shape the nature of feminist faculty organizations. Finally, future research should address the following questions. Does activism differ for academic men? If so, how? What do activist agendas and strategies look like for faculty of color and other underrepresented groups?

Given the recommendations for future research, it is clear that the present study served its initial purpose as an exploration. Many questions about the nature of activism among feminist academics remain unanswered. However, this study has presented the rich experiences of academic women in two different grassroots feminist faculty organizations that have shed light on how they construct their agendas and strategies and relate to women internal and external to academe. This study can also serve as a springboard for future research that can provide more insights into activism among feminist academics.

In the final analysis, women in the Association for Women Faculty at the University of Arizona and in the Faculty Women's Caucus at the University of Nebraska have integrated feminism and professionalism to construct activist strategies. The experiences of these women tell stories of success as individuals and as collectives. While their strategies may have limitations and there are other ways to pursue change, including structural, systemic change, these women and these organizations are successful and make a difference for other women and for the institutions of which they are a part. Perhaps these women haven't started a revolution, but that doesn't diminish their success nor does it mean that change has not occurred. Rather, the women in the AWF and the FWC show that grassroots activism is alive in the academy. Moreover, they challenge us to expand our preconceived notions of feminist organizations, academic feminism, and activism to include a broader range of strategies that have resulted in institutional change.

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